

Exams Contingency Plan 2023/24

For the attention of:	All Staff
Produced by:	Group Exams Manager
Approved by:	SLT
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Vision, Purpose & Values

Our Vision

Our students will be recognised locally & nationally for their positive impact on the communities and industries in which they choose to work.

Our Purpose

To inspire our students to gain the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to be resilient and thrive in an ever-changing world.

Our Values

Excellence: A culture of creativity, high expectations, ambition and aspiration

Respect: Showing fairness, courtesy and mutual respect to each other and our environment

Integrity: Honesty, openness and trust at the heart of College life

Diversity: Celebrating diversity and inclusivity as a key to our success

Exams Contingency Plan 2023-24

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1. Key Staff Involved in the Plan

Role	Names
Head of centre	Gillian May
Deputy CEO	Richard Munday
Principal	Anne Entwistle & Amanda Down
Group Director Digital Marketing & Admissions	Dan Fairbairn
Head of MIS & Exams	Dave Bradshaw
Group Exams Manager	Fatima Rana
Exams Office Staff	Kofil Chowdhury, Amanda Flemington, Simmi Pawar, Kiran Basra, Claire Burt, Harriet Wigmore-Welsh, Robert Cura and Karan Sidhar
Head of ALS	Emma DeGoede (FE) Allison Hiskett (SF) and Debbie Garcia (SF)

2. Purpose of the Plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at The Windsor Forest Colleges Group. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the **Ofqual Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the publication *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted* and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan in the event of widespread disruption to the Examination System in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland**.

This plan also confirms The Windsor Forest Colleges Group is compliant with the JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the Centre has in place:

- *a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or staff absence. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.*
- **Operating across more than one centre:**

As the head of centre and exams officers operates across more than one centre, the head of centre will ensure there is suitable support in place, so they can meet their

obligations in relation to the recruitment, selection, and training staff across the centres for which they are responsible. The arrangements covered in this contingency plan relate to the following centres:

- Windsor Forest Colleges Group
- Langley College
- Windsor College
- Strode's College
- BCA College

3. Possible Causes of Disruption to the Exam Process

1. Exam manager extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the exam cycle not undertaken including:

Planning

- *annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and awarding body specifications being delivered.*
- *annual exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates, and deadlines.*
- *sufficient invigilators not recruited.*

Entries

- *awarding bodies not being informed of early/estimated entries which prompts release of early information required by teaching staff.*
- *candidates not being entered with awarding bodies for external exams/assessment.*
- *awarding body entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred.*

Pre-exams

- *invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams.*
- *exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared.*
- *candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates.*
- *confidential exam/assessment materials and candidates' work not stored under required secure conditions.*
- *internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators.*

Exam time

- *exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies.*
- *required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration.*
- *candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies.*

Results and post-results

- *access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates.*
- *the facilitation of the post-results services*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

The department is structured with a group exams manager, x3 deputy exams managers, 6 exams officers and an exams administrator + 45 invigilators.

- In a period of extended absence, the deputy exams managers would take responsibility for carrying out the duties of the Group Exams Manager and would work in consultation with the Head of MIS & Exams. Appropriate backfilling of responsibilities would then be decided upon by the Head of MIS & Exams. All members of the invigilation team regularly receive training and colleagues involved in the administration of key processes are trained on how to carry out processes and who to contact in extremes.
- Referring to roles, responsibilities and processes as detailed in our Exams policy where the group exams manager's role or other vital role may need to be covered by another person (and referring to other resources to support processes, for example the use of an Exams Officer Handbook, Exams Calendar, annual exams plan, procedures manual(s), exam day checklist, exam room checklist etc.)

2. Head of ALS extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:

Planning

- *candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements.*
- *centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010*
- *evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated.*

Pre-exams

- *approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body.*
- *centre-delegated arrangements not put in place.*
- *modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline.*
- *staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained.*

Exam time

- *access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- In the event of the extended absence of the Head of ALS, appropriate backfilling of responsibilities would be decided upon by Head of Centre.
- Learning support managers to step up and ensure all appropriate preparations are made for the exam's series

3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received.
- Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies
- Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled
- Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- In the event of a period of extended absence of a member of the teaching staff, the relevant Director for the curriculum area would arrange teaching cover from within the staff team and/or the wider staffing establishment at the college. New staff providing cover would be briefed as part of their induction process on arrangements for assessment and examinations. Their practice in terms of assessments would be monitored by the Director.

4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams

Invigilator shortage on peak exam days

Invigilator absence on the day of an exam

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- New invigilators undergo training by the Group Exams Manager and may complete a period of shadowing, following appointment. They are permitted to work independently once they and the Group Exams Manager are happy that they are competent and confident in processes and procedures. Annual training sessions are held in December and April for all invigilators in order to refresh their knowledge and communicate JCQ regulation changes and update local information. The college retains a pool of approximately 45 invigilators. When invigilators resign/retire from the pool, recruitment procedures are begun.
- Colleagues within the wider college staff may be required to assist during main exam sessions due to either extended absence of invigilators or due to high demand e.g. large

GCSE exams. They are trained by the Group Exams Manager regarding their responsibilities and duties.

- Minor absence issues (such as an invigilator calling in sick) are covered by a member of the Exams team or attempts are made to contact another invigilator from the pool and lastly, support staff e.g. administrators are asked for help.

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning.

Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days

Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- Most exams are accommodated in the Sports Hall (Langley and Strode's) and 2nd Floor West (Windsor). Other rooms are used when required and the exam team works closely with estates to optimize room utilization.
- Other WFCG sites will be utilised in the first instance if the main rooms used for exams are unavailable.
- Head of centre to close the college to students and implement remote learning due to unplanned incidents to free up space for examinations.
- Where required the head of centre would look to utilise accommodation at other sites within the college group to ensure continuation of exams and minimal disruption.

6. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- Exams Officer will work with IT and make contact with the relevant Awarding Body to seek further guidance.
- Senior Leaders will monitor the situation and take any action required as directed by the Awarding Bodies.
- As per the DfE guidance the College Group has a separate Risk Protection Arrangement

Cyber Response Plan which outlines what the College Group will do in the event of a Cyber Attack. This is a detailed plan including key contacts and processes that will be followed.

- The IT department will keep up to date with the National Cyber Security Centre's (NCSC) advice and guidance and take appropriate steps to ensure data is backed up and stored securely.

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

MIS system failure at final entry deadline

MIS system failure during exams preparation

MIS system failure at results release time

Power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen test

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- The college endeavours to minimise any ICT disruption via resilient design and preventative maintenance. In the event of an issue this would be dealt with by the ICT support team who test and update the systems on a regular basis.
- Where such failure impacts on scheduled exams, steps would be taken to resolve the problem as quickly as possible and to minimise disruption to candidates.
- IT, Exams and Curriculum staff will liaise to minimise disruption and ensure the integrity of the exam.

8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Whole centre evacuation (or lock down) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Applying for special consideration for candidates

9. Disruption of teaching time – centre closed for an extended period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption (and detail on the method(s) of communication)
- Posting information on our website; updates on local radio etc.
- Sourcing alternative venues/facilities

10. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

Response is dependent on the type of issue.

- If a candidate is able to sit the exam but cannot attend the our Centre due to a crisis, appropriate communication with the relevant Awarding Bodies would be undertaken by the Exams Manager and alternative options would be explored (home, hospital, alternative Centre etc.).
- Appropriate use of Special Consideration policies would be applied should the candidate/candidates be unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances and where alternative arrangements could not be made or are not agreed by the Awarding Body.

11. Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period

(Including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- In the event of our Centre not being able to open as normal, appropriate communication with the relevant Awarding Bodies would be undertaken by the Exams Manager and alternative options would be explored such as moving exams to an external location or one of the other college sites as appropriate.
- All arrangements would be agreed with the Awarding Body before being put in place.
- In such instances, details would be communicated to candidates via the college's website, email and text facilities.

- Staff involved in exams (including invigilators) would be contacted by email, telephone and text.

12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Centres would need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions and should have plans in place to facilitate such an action.
- Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.
- As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date)

13. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, we should seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.
- For any examinations where we make their own arrangements for transportation, we should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations.
- We are to ensure secure storage of completed examination papers until collection.

14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations.
- Where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services

(Including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption.

Distribution of results:

- We would distribute results in person if normal electronic distribution is not possible.
- We would plan to access our results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, if access to the centre is not possible.
- We would plan to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site or online.

Facilitation of post results services:

- We would make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location or online.
- We would contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible

4. Further Guidance to Inform Procedures and Implement Contingency Planning

Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

Contingency planning

Awarding organisations are required to establish, maintain, and comply with an up-to-date detailed written contingency plan, to mitigate any incident they have identified may occur. This includes having communication plans for external parties ([Ofqual General Condition of Recognition A6](#)). Schools and colleges should also be prepared for possible disruption to exams and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these

General contingency guidance

- [emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [handling strike action in schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [exceptional closure days](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [checklist - exceptional closure of schools](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [school terms and school closures](#) from NI Direct
- [opening schools in extremely bad weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government

Disruption to assessments or exams

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organization, you should make sure that any exam or timetabled assessment takes place if it is possible to hold it. This may mean relocating to alternative premises.

You should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation if:

- the exam or assessment cannot take place.
- a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student's control.

Steps you should take

Exam planning

Review contingency plans well in advance of each exam or assessment series. Consider how, if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply with the awarding organisation's requirements.

In the event of disruption

- Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
- Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre can open.
- Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's [Centre emergency evacuation procedure](#).
- Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

- Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

- Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.
- Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment later.
- Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
- Return scripts to awarding organizations in line with their instructions. Never make alternative arrangements for the transportation of completed exam scripts, unless told to do so by the awarding organization.

Steps the awarding organization should take:

Exam planning

- Establish and maintain, and always comply with, an up to date, written contingency plan.
- Ensure that the arrangements in place with centres and other third parties enable them to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with their conditions of recognition.

In the event of disruption

- Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
- Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
- Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
- Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards, or public confidence.
- Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

After the exam

Consider any requests for special consideration for affected students. For example, those who may have lost their internally assessed work or whose performance in assessments or exams could have been affected by the disruption.

If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption

If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.

Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects.

See also [JCQ's guidance on special considerations](#)

Wider communications

The regulators, [Ofqual](#) in England, [Qualifications Wales](#) in Wales and [CCEA Regulation](#) in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The [Department for Education](#) in England, the [Department of Education](#) in Northern Ireland, and the [Welsh Government](#) will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption; and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

Awarding organisations will alert the [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service](#) (UCAS) and the [Central Applications Office](#) (CAO) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.

Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments.

The governments' view across England, Wales and Northern Ireland is education in 2022 to 2023 has returned to normal. Schools are open and examinations will go ahead in summer 2023.

As education is devolved, in the event of any widespread sustained national disruption to examinations or assessments, national government departments will communicate with regulators, awarding organisations and centres prior to a public announcement. Regulators will provide advice to government departments on implications for examinations and assessments, including exam timetables.

In November 2022, Ofqual and the Department for Education issued [decisions following a consultation on the resilience of the qualifications sector](#) for specific examinations awarded in England in summer 2023. Ofqual has published [Guidance for schools, colleges and other exam centres on gathering evidence of student performance](#) for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and Project qualifications to support resilience in the exam system in England in 2023.

The Department for Education has updated its guidance on [handling strike action in schools](#) in England in light of the industrial action in 2023. The guidance recommends schools should prioritise the running of examinations and assessments on any strike days and should review their contingency plans to make this happen. Schools, colleges, and other exam centres should speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

(Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - **What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted** (last updated 18 January 2023) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted>)

JCQ

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will

ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates.

Further information may be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body/bodies.

15.3 Centres should prepare plans for any disruption to examinations as part of their general emergency planning. It is important to ensure that relevant centre staff are familiar with the plan. Consideration should be given as to how these arrangements will be communicated to candidates, parents and staff should disruption to examinations occur.

15.4 In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the relevant awarding body must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency days' for examinations, summer 2023. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland*.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

The designation of 'contingency days' within the common examination timetable is in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2023, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it is agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres must therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for conducting examinations 2022-2023** <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, Contingency planning)

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations (Effective from 1 September 2022)
www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

JCQ Notice to Centres - Examination contingency plan/examinations policy
www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/

General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

A guide to the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response; Exam and assessment disruption;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning
www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

Wales

School closures: examinations gov.wales/school-closures-examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weather: guidance for schools gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days

Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School - exceptional closure of schools www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools

National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC's free [Web Check](#) and [Mail Check](#) services can help protect schools from cyber-attacks. Two NCSC cyber security services, which are already helping thousands of organisations to protect their websites and email servers from cyber-attacks, are now available to **all UK schools**. Both tools are available free of charge, are quick to set up, and thereafter run automatically. More information is available from the [NCSC website](#).

The Department for Education has been asking centres to review **National Cyber Security Centre advice** following increasing number of cyber-attacks involving ransomware infections. The NCSC information supports centres in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work.

Ransomware attacks continue and the Department is reminding centres to review the NCSC advice and to take precautions. This includes ensuring that you have backups in place for your key services and data.

For ease of reference, the Department has highlighted key links relating to the NCSC cyber security guidance below:

1. [More ransomware attacks on UK education - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)
2. [Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement](#)
3. [Offline backups in an online world](#)
4. [Backing up your data](#)
5. [Practical resources to help improve your cyber security](#)
6. [Building Resilience: Ransomware and the risks to schools and ways to prevent it](#)
7. [School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)